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This collection of Freydoun Farokhzad's<sup>1</sup> poems, *Andere Jahreszeit* (Another Season), written in German and translated into English by Nima Mina, introduces readers to aspects of Farokhzad's work that have been occluded by his reputation as singer, songwriter, and TV and radio entertainer in Iran prior to the 1979 revolution. Iranians

<sup>1</sup>Nima Mina has retained the transliteration of Freydoun Farokhzad used in Germany.

This collection of Freydoun Farokhzad's<sup>1</sup> poems, *Andere Jahreszeit* (Another Season), written in German and translated into English by Nima Mina, introduces readers to aspects of Farokhzad's work that have been occluded by his reputation as singer, songwriter, and TV and radio entertainer in Iran prior to the 1979 revolution. Iranians who remember Farokhzad from the TV and radio shows he hosted, *Mikhak-e Noqreh'i* (Silver Carnation), *The National Show*, *Salam Hamsāyeh-hā*, and *Bozorgtarin Namāyesh-e Hafteh*, will be pleasantly surprised to discover the less well-known facet of his artistic work.

Long before Farokhzad rose to prominence for his role in the Iranian TV industry, he had published poetry in German while he attended university. In 1963 eleven of his poems were published in the literary yearbook *Vorzeichen 2*, alongside works by prominent German writers of the time. A year later, he published a book of poetry, *Andere Jahrzeit* (Another Season), for which he received the literary award of the city of Berlin. This book of poetry is included in the collection edited and masterfully translated into English by Nima Mina and consists of four chapters: "Thought in Persian, Spoken in German," "Portrait of a Country," "Experience," and "What I Have Left to Say." The German original of all the poems appear alongside the English renderings by Mina, making the volume an excellent resource for students and scholars of comparative literature and translation studies. Also included is an afterword written by Johannes Bobrowski, a German literary figure who joined the anti-Nazi movement and fought on the eastern and western fronts during the Second World War. After the Berlin Wall was erected, Bobrowski chose to live in East Berlin despite the fact that he was not a communist and belonged to one of the five non-communist parties. In addition to Bobrowski's commentary, Mina includes the poem "The Autumn" as well as reproductions of a handwritten letter and postcard addressed by Farokhzad to Bobrowski.

Mina's informative introduction is richly enhanced by his archival research and

interviews he conducted with members of Farokhzad's family, friends, and acquaintances. In his introduction, Mina traces Farokhzad's trajectory from his early schooling in Iran to his university education in Germany. When Farokhzad left for Germany, he was twenty-two and, notwithstanding his age, he acquired German rather quickly. Subsequently he completed a master's degree in political science at Ludwig Maximilien University in Munich and wrote a thesis on the relationship between the state and the Protestant church in the German Democratic Republic. He had embarked on a doctoral thesis, "Marx, Engels, Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and the Polish Question," which he abandoned to return to Iran after his sister's death in a car accident in February 1967. On his return, Farokhzad was accompanied by his wife, Anja Buczowski, a writer and actress, whom he married in 1962, and their son, Rostam. Farokhzad remained in Iran after the marriage ended and he became one of the most successful figures in Iranian popular culture, but his career as an entertainer and TV personality came to a halt after the 1979 revolution.

Farokhzad was initially sympathetic toward the revolutionary movement and provided support in the form of aid for those injured in the demonstrations against the monarchy. But soon after the success of the revolution, like other celebrities and entertainers, he was convened by the revolutionary tribunal and forced to sign an agreement stipulating that he would refrain from public performances considered anathema to the new Islamic ideals and codes of conduct and appearance. The tribunal also confiscated some of his property. Like many other members of the Iranian entertainment industry, Farokhzad was profoundly disillusioned with the outcome of the revolution and distanced himself from it.

After his flight from Iran in 1982, Farokhzad joined Iranian opposition forces and drew on his popularity to galvanize large crowds against the regime. He was equally active in assisting underage Iranian POWs in Iraq: "He travelled to Iraq three times on behalf of UNICEF, and each time brought between 25 and 30 of these children

back to Europe with him" (p. 10). He joined the organization Derafsh-e Kāviāni, founded by Manuchehr Ganji in Paris, and moderated one of their shortwave radio shows. Farokhzad's opposition to the revolutionary regime did not go unnoticed. In August 1992, when he was living in Bonn, he was stabbed to death and beheaded by three individuals, believed to have been agents of the Islamic Republic. While Farokhzad's gruesome murder was investigated by the German Federal Office of Criminal Investigation (Bundeskriminalamt) and Interpol and the assassins were identified, no one was charged with the crime. Mina attributes this inaction to the German government's interest in establishing closer diplomatic and economic ties with Iran which would have been jeopardized had the investigations led to arrests and trials.

In the portrait Mina paints of Freydoun Farokhzad, he is careful not to have Forugh Farokhzad's reputation overshadow her younger brother's contributions to Iranian culture. Citing from correspondence between the siblings, he reveals Forugh's support for her brother's poetry and his pursuit of literary creativity. Farokhzad was also warmly received by Bozorg Alavi, an Iranian writer who lived in exile in East Berlin, where Farokhzad visited him. One of the poems, "Persian Women," is dedicated to Alavi.

The poems range in length and, as indicated by the chapter titles, theme. Mina describes the poems in the first and second chapters as imagistic "with no specific, named local references. They express the sensory perceptions of a detached, lyrical 'I' who is confronted with a new environment," which the speaker does not perceive as alienating but rather attempts to comprehend and imbue with a "homelike feeling" (p. 26). In contrast, Mina sees the poems in the third and fourth chapters as more abstract and yet focused on historical and political events from the atom bomb to racial segregation, to Berlin as a divided city, to dictatorship. Farokhzad conveys his keen observations in a language and style Bobrowski does not see as a

mere product of imitation:

I think that with these poems something new has happened, something we should not allow quickly identifiable influences to disguise: the naturalness we notice in the language extends all the way to the metaphors; they immediately gain life and energy from the initial situation so that they evolve into actions and able to grow, walk, to fly. (p. 145)

The poems about Iran, or the speaker's impressions of his homeland, exhibit at once a sense of longing and an acute awareness of realities that cut through the veneer of the familiar and the treasured, as in the example of "Avowal":

My fatherland  
The land of roses  
and nightingales

Wilted roses

Mute nightingales. (p. 88)

The poem's invocation of the classical Persian tropes of roses and nightingales sets up an expectation of their affirmation, but instead they are revealed to be emptied out of any association with the sublime and the otherworldly. In Farokhzad's keen observations, we see a desire to translate and bring across impressions of home and homeland without glossing over the discordant and the disturbing. For instance, the poem "Land in Shade" begins with images of violence that set the stage for an inevitable departure: "thus I leave that I'll no longer / have to enchain/my words" (p. 94). Written long before Farokhzad's flight from post-revolution Iran, these poems foreshadow the exile Farokhzad and countless other Iranians were to experience in the decades after the revolution. They also remind us of the persistence of political oppression in spite of a revolution whose objective was to end tyranny.



*Freydoun Farokhzad: Another Season* is a welcome addition to the Iranian cultural history and will serve scholars and amateurs alike. The collection will also shed light on the hopes of a generation that sacrificed a great deal for ideals which were never realized. Nima Mina is to be applauded for deepening our understanding of Farokhzad’s multifaceted contributions to modern Iranian culture and its global reach.

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## Notes

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